

Representatives of the Upper Susquehanna Synod:

CaTALYST (Creating a Thoughtful Authentic Loving Youthful Space Together) was formed by a small group of young adults (some who are younger at heart than they are in body!) after receiving the CaSTLE grant. SueEllen Spotts had learned through a conversation with the Camp Mount Luther 2025 summer staff that there was a desire for a new ministry to be formed. Something that encouraged community, and allowed people to interact with their faith without being confined to a building. We quickly decided that we wanted to expand ourselves to be known across the ELCA by applying to be a part of the Gather Network. Through this process, we have expanded across multiple states, having others from farther synods participate in parts of our community.

In addition to the CaSTLE grant, we have also received a Thrivent Action Fund Grant and the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Innovation Grant. We have been using these grants to pay for our operating costs, i.e. for food for dinner church, games for game nights, and lunch for our volunteers for our service projects.

Through thoughtful conversation by the administrative team, it was decided that we should meet 4 times a month. Twice in person: once for dinner church and once for a service project. And twice online through a platform called Discord: once for a Bible study-esque event we call faith and fellowship (titled to not limit us to only Biblical Studies), and once for a game night.

The group is primarily geared towards young adults looking for an alternative way to worship and to have a place for community in their faith that is new and interesting. It has grown over the months to include all ages, especially at dinner church! All are encouraged to participate in dinner church, a time where we prepare our food together and then dine together as we also worship. Dinner church has been a great opportunity for people of all ages to get to discuss their faith together without being pressured to do more than just sit and listen to others while they eat, but are always welcome to share their thoughts if so moved. We have geared our events to share a core idea so we have a theme throughout the month. We have used themes such as wilderness, creation, and current events. This way we tie ourselves to the world and what's going on around us, while being able to reflect upon it all, and through service projects, act in it too.

Our service projects have ranged from Christmas caroling at the Buffalo Valley Evertrue Nursing Home, providing meals to the residents at the Milton Towers with Milton Lutheran Church, painting the basement of the Evergreen Center at Camp Mount Luther, and more! We plan to spread out across our synod and lend a hand wherever we can to assist with service projects where requested! We are open to all ideas for service projects and are hoping more congregations will take us up on our offer to provide services to them! We will soon be working with the Jubilee Kitchen in Danville.

We have held game nights and faith and fellowship each month on Discord. These are great opportunities for meeting and fellowship in a laid back environment. There's always laughter and

fun when we are sharing our evenings playing games such as Jackbox games and Kahoots. We are also open to other ideas for new games to play online.

Our Faith and Fellowship is the time we dig deeper into our month's theme and tie it into our Faith. During Faith and Fellowship, we talk about a Bible story and how it connects to our month's theme. We sometimes tie in current events of the world and how they affect our faith and how we use faith to navigate life.

We are hoping that over the course of the next few years, we will be able to branch out across the entirety of the Synod, traveling to the corners of the synod to offer our hands to the service of others, through fellowship and service. We want to encourage all who are interested, to join our group and attend as they can. We want to encourage those who have gone off to college to have their tie to home through our group, and know when they come back, they have a community who will welcome them with open arms. We are hoping to encourage all people to feel they can come as the most authentic version of themselves and be loved and accepted.

It doesn't matter who you are, whether you're young in body, or just young at heart, all are welcome to be a part of CaTALYST!